

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1373

To designate the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a Regional Coordination Partnership of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 15, 2017

Mr. WICKER (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. CASSIDY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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## A BILL

To designate the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a Regional Coordination Partnership of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-  
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Gulf States Protection  
5 and Restoration Coordination Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS; PURPOSES.**

7       (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

8           (1) The Gulf of Mexico is a valuable resource  
9           of national and international importance, continu-

1       ously serving the people of the United States and  
2       other countries as an important source of food, eco-  
3       nomic productivity, recreation, beauty, and enjoy-  
4       ment.

5               (2) Over many years, the resource productivity  
6       and water quality of the Gulf of Mexico and its wa-  
7       tershed have been diminished by point and nonpoint  
8       source pollution, increasing population demands,  
9       economic development, and natural and man-made  
10      hazard events.

11               (3) The protection of the Gulf of Mexico re-  
12       gional ecosystem has been traditionally underserved  
13       and overlooked compared to other great water bodies  
14       of the United States, even though the region ac-  
15       counts for 17 percent of United States gross domes-  
16       tic product and would rank as the 7th largest econ-  
17       omy in the world.

18               (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-  
19       gress that the United States should seek to attain coordi-  
20       nation of the protection and restoration efforts of the Gulf  
21       of Mexico in order to reduce duplication of efforts and  
22       maximize efficiencies through a collaborative regional ef-  
23       fort by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, in consultation with  
24       Federal agencies and State and local authorities.

1       (c) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act and the  
2 amendments made by this Act are as follows:

3               (1) To expand and strengthen cooperative vol-  
4               untary efforts to protect and restore the Gulf of  
5               Mexico.

6               (2) To expand Federal support for monitoring,  
7               management, and restoration activities in the Gulf  
8               of Mexico and its watershed.

9               (3) To commit the United States to a com-  
10               prehensive cooperative program to achieve improved  
11               water quality in, and improvements in the produc-  
12               tivity of living resources of, the Gulf of Mexico.

13               (4) To establish a Gulf of Mexico Alliance to  
14               coordinate Federal and State authorities with other  
15               voluntary efforts for the collaborative management  
16               of the large marine ecosystem, thereby reducing du-  
17               plication of efforts and maximizing opportunities to  
18               leverage restoration support in the Gulf of Mexico  
19               region.

20 **SEC. 3. GULF STATES PROTECTION AND RESTORATION CO-**  
21               **ORDINATION.**

22       The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16  
23 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end  
24 the following:

1   **“SEC. 320. GULF STATES PROTECTION AND RESTORATION**

2                   **COORDINATION.**

3       “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4               “(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ‘Administrator’ means the Administrator of the National  
5               Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

7               “(2) ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT TEAM.—The  
8               term ‘Alliance Management Team’ means the governing body of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance consisting  
9               of the designated voting members representing the  
10              Governors of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida.

13               “(3) GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE.—The term  
14               ‘Gulf of Mexico Alliance’ means the formal collaborative organization of Federal, State, local, and private participants established by the 5 Gulf States in  
15               2004 as a nonregulatory, inclusive network of partners to provide a broad geographic focus on the primary environmental issues affecting the Gulf of  
16               Mexico.

21               “(4) GULF OF MEXICO ECOSYSTEM.—The term  
22               ‘Gulf of Mexico ecosystem’ means the ecosystem of  
23               the Gulf of Mexico and its watershed.

24       “(b) AUTHORIZATION OF GULF OF MEXICO ALLI-  
25           ANCE.—

1           “(1) DESIGNATION AS A REGIONAL COORDINA-  
2       TION PARTNERSHIP.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is  
3       designated as a Regional Coordination Partnership  
4       of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-  
5       tration.

6           “(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Gulf of Mexico Al-  
7       liance shall be—

8           “(A) headed by a Director who, by reason  
9       of management experience and technical exper-  
10      tise relating to the Gulf of Mexico, is highly  
11      qualified to direct the development of plans and  
12      programs on a variety of Gulf of Mexico issues,  
13      as determined by the Alliance Management  
14      Team; and

15           “(B) located in a State all, or a portion of  
16      the coastline, border the Gulf of Mexico.

17           “(3) FUNCTIONS.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance  
18      shall—

19           “(A) promote coordination of the actions  
20      of State agencies in the States that border the  
21      Gulf of Mexico and other authorities with the  
22      actions of the appropriate officials of the Fed-  
23      eral agencies and State and local authorities in  
24      the Gulf of Mexico region in developing strate-  
25      gies—

1                     “(i) to improve the water quality, pro-  
2                     tect nonregulated living resources, increase  
3                     valuable habitats, and enhance coastal re-  
4                     silience in the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;  
5                     and

6                     “(ii) to obtain the support of appro-  
7                     priate officials;

8                     “(B) in cooperation with appropriate Fed-  
9                     eral, State, and local authorities, develop and  
10                    implement specific action plans to carry out the  
11                    Gulf of Mexico Alliance regional protection and  
12                    restoration coordination goals;

13                    “(C) coordinate and implement priority  
14                    plans and projects, and facilitate science, re-  
15                    search, modeling, monitoring, data collection,  
16                    and other activities that support the Gulf of  
17                    Mexico Alliance’s goals through the provision of  
18                    grants under subsection (c);

19                    “(D) implement outreach programs for  
20                    public information, education, and participation  
21                    to foster stewardship of the resources of the  
22                    Gulf of Mexico;

23                    “(E) develop and make available, through  
24                    publications, technical assistance, and other ap-  
25                    propriate means, information pertaining to the

1           environmental quality and living resources of  
2           the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

3           “(F) serve as the liaison with, and provide  
4           information to, the Mexican members of the  
5           Gulf of Mexico States Accord and Mexican  
6           counterparts; and

7           “(G) focus the efforts and resources of the  
8           Gulf of Mexico Alliance on activities that will  
9           result in measurable improvements to water  
10          quality and living resources of the Gulf of Mex-  
11          ico ecosystem by coordinating protection and  
12          restoration programs to minimize duplication  
13          and maximize leveraging opportunities.

14         “(c) GRANTS.—

15         “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Gulf of Mexico Alli-  
16          ance may provide grants to nonprofit organizations,  
17          State and local governments, colleges, universities,  
18          interstate agencies, and individuals to carry out this  
19          section for use in—

20           “(A) monitoring the water quality and liv-  
21          ing resources of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

22           “(B) researching the effects of natural and  
23          human-induced environmental changes on the  
24          water quality and living resources of the Gulf of  
25          Mexico ecosystem;

1               “(C) developing and executing cooperative  
2               strategies that address the water quality, coast-  
3               al resilience, and living resource needs in the  
4               Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

5               “(D) developing and implementing locally  
6               based protection and restoration programs or  
7               projects within a watershed that complement  
8               such strategies, including the creation, restora-  
9               tion, protection, or enhancement of habitat as-  
10               sociated with the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; and

11               “(E) eliminating or reducing nonpoint  
12               sources that discharge pollutants that contami-  
13               nate the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, including  
14               activities to eliminate leaking septic systems  
15               and construct connections to local sewage sys-  
16               tems.

17               “(2) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Administrative  
18               costs in the form of salaries, overhead, or indirect  
19               costs for services provided and charged against pro-  
20               grams or projects carried out using funds made  
21               available through a grant under this subsection shall  
22               not exceed 25 percent of the amount of the grant.

23               “(d) REPORTS.—

24               “(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than Decem-  
25               ber 30, 2017, and annually thereafter, the Director

1 of the Alliance shall submit to the Administrator  
2 and make available to the public a report that de-  
3 scribes—

4 “(A) each project and activity funded  
5 under this section during the previous fiscal  
6 year;

7 “(B) the goals and objectives of those  
8 projects and activities; and

9 “(C) the net benefits of projects and activi-  
10 ties funded under this section during previous  
11 fiscal years.

12 “(2) ASSESSMENT.—

13 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than April  
14 30, 2020, and every 3 years thereafter, the Ad-  
15 ministrator, in coordination with the Alliance  
16 Management Team, shall complete an assess-  
17 ment on the effectiveness of the Gulf of Mexico  
18 Alliance’s ability to coordinate regional prior-  
19 ities and submit to Congress a comprehensive  
20 report on such assessment.

21 “(B) REQUIREMENTS.—The assessment  
22 and report described in subparagraph (A)  
23 shall—

1                 “(i) assess the overall status of coordinated  
2                 restoration and protection efforts in  
3                 the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

4                 “(ii) assess the effectiveness of the  
5                 Gulf of Mexico Alliance management strategies being implemented, and the extent to  
6                 which the priority needs of the region are being met through that implementation;  
7                 and

8                 “(iii) make recommendations for the improved coordination among the regulatory and nonregulatory programs operating in the region, including strengthening strategies being implemented or adopting improved strategies.

9  
10                 “(e) BUDGET ITEM.—The Administrator, in the annual submission to Congress of the budget of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, shall include a funding line item request for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a separate budget line item.

11  
12                 “(f) LIMITATION ON REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—  
13                 Nothing in this section establishes any new legal or regulatory authority of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, other

1 than the authority to provide grants in accordance with  
2 this section.

3       “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
4 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section,  
5 to remain available until expended—

6           “(1) \$5,000,000 for fiscal year 2018;  
7           “(2) \$5,100,000 for fiscal year 2019;  
8           “(3) \$5,202,000 for fiscal year 2020;  
9           “(4) \$5,306,040 for fiscal year 2021;  
10          “(5) \$5,412,160 for fiscal year 2022; and  
11          “(6) \$5,520,404 for fiscal year 2023.”.

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